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PROGRAM The Today Show STATION WRC-TV NBC Network

DATE February 8, 1983 7:00 A.M. CITY Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT Interview with Dr. Dabringhaus

JANE PAULEY: The incredible case of Nazi war criminal Klaus Barbie has taken a rather ugly turn in our direction. Known as the Butcher of Lyon, Barbie directed the torture and murder of thousands of French citizens during World War II. Well, was he later a paid informer for American intelligence? Did Americans actually aid his escape to South America?

Dr. Erhard Dabringhaus says he worked with Barbie for about six months during 1948. Dr. Dabringhaus is now a professor of German language and literature at Wayne State University. He joins us from WDIV, our NBC affiliate in Detroit.

At the time you were working with this man, did you know who he was or what he'd done?

DR. EHARD DABRINGHAUS: We didn't know the extent of his capability, or culpability in the atrocities. But we -- I knew he was an S.V. member, which was a notorious German intelligence agency.

PAULEY: And you also knew that the French wanted him.

DR. DABRINGHAUS: We learned that during the time that I was with him. Yes.

PAULEY: And you hid him, in effect, from the French at that time?

DR. DABRINGHAUS: Yes. I was told that he was still of some value to us and that I should deny that I know where he is.

PAULEY: What, in fact, was he selling?

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DR. DABRINGHAUS: Well, like everybody else at that time, we had lots of intelligence agencies on occupied ground in Germany, and any bit of information would be valuable. The Germans might have had some kind of werewolf organization. That was a rumor at the end of the war. We would like to find out. If we had a good Nazi working for us, we thought that would be a trump card in our operation.

PAULEY: Did he in fact share any information that was very important in 1948?

DR. DABRINGHAUS: He, of course, made reports once a week, and I translated them, sent them on up to our headquarters. I only remember one particular incident where he reported about a uranium mine in northern Czechoslovakia. He certainly had other information. I can't recall it. It's a long time ago.

PAULEY: What were the implications of that Czechoslovakian uranium mine?

DR. DABRINGHAUS: Well, I believe at that time we still had a monopoly on the atom bomb. And if the Russians are mining uranium, it looked like they might be ready to build one also.

PAULEY: Was Barbie also informing on other Nazis?

DR. DABRINGHAUS: Yes. On occasion he told us of German Nazis who were living illegally in Germany and other parts of Europe.

PAULEY: And what did American intelligence do about them? Were they pursued?

DR. DABRINGHAUS: Yes, they were pursued. And we followed it up with other agencies who were in the area, or something to that effect.

PAULEY: For what purpose? To get intelligence from them or to lead them to prosecution?

DR. DABRINGHAUS: I think the latter was true at that time. Unless, I suppose, one of the other intelligence agencies, of which there were many on the ground in occupied Germany, thought they could use them for their own purposes.

PAULEY: Why are you just coming forward now, 25 years later? Have you just realized that...

DR. DABRINGHAUS: I had never denied that I knew this fellow. I've even told it to French diplomats, whenever I met a consular officer. But he would just tell me, "Well, he's in Bolivia. What do you want me to do about it?"

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It was on your nightly news broadcast that I saw his face for the first time closeup and recognized him totally as the man I worked with for six months.

PAULEY: So you only identified him recently, after...

DR. DABRINGHAUS: That's right.

PAULEY: And you're correct. It's been longer than 25 years -- as Klaus Barbie.

Now, do you feel any personal moral culpability for having been involved in a man responsible for the deaths of thousands?

DR. DABRINGHAUS: Not really. I think I did my job, as an agent of our intelligence service, and [technical difficulties] at that time. I left to another assignment after the end of '48.

PAULEY: Now, we are hearing other reports that not only was he paid, but evidently American intelligence aided his escape. Do you know anything of that?

DR. DABRINGHAUS: Yes. I think that's not correct. We did pay him for information. And I don't believe that any of our even higher headquarters in the occupied zone of Germany knew that we were using him. Certainly our government did not have a policy to employ or protect him.

PAULEY: Do you think that there is any moral justification now for using him in the way we did?

DR. DABRINGHAUS: Of course. I hope we still do that today in the intelligence circles.

PAULEY: So you would repeat the same procedures.

DR. DABRINGHAUS: Yes, but I wouldn't let him get away at the end.

PAULEY: How much did you pay him?

DR. DABRINGHAUS: Seventeen hundred dollars per month for several months.

PAULEY: Professor Dabringhaus, thank you for sharing this story with us this morning.

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